

SPECIAL-INTEREST GROUP CREATED FOR PEDIATRIC BMT

A section for pediatric blood and marrow transplantation has been created within ASBMT. The new special-interest group (SIG) was approved by the Board of Directors in February and a charter issued in May.

In announcing the new section, ASBMT President Robert Negrin said, "The purpose is to provide an international forum for academic interaction between health care providers with an interest in hematopoietic cell transplantation in children and adolescents." Membership is open to physicians, nurses, pharmacists, ethicists, clinical research associates, and others who have a particular interest in pediatric hematopoietic stem cell transplantation.

The special-interest group will be led by a Coordinating Committee chaired by Morton Cowan, MD, of the UCSF Children's Hospital, San Francisco. Other members of the initial committee are:

- Steven Grupp, MD, PhD—Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (vice chair)
- Amanda Termuhlen, MD—Columbia Children's Hospital, Ohio
- Kirk Schultz, MD—British Columbia's Children's Hospital, Vancouver
- Vicki Fisher, RN, MSN, CPNP—University Hospitals Health System, Cleveland

Dr. Cowan said that the pediatric SIG will focus first on the development of a series of presentations at the 2007 BMT Tandem Meetings next February in Keystone. These will complement presentations pertaining to pediatrics in the main plenary and concurrent scientific sessions and workshops. Abstracts submitted on pediatric topics will be considered for the SIG program.

"Our objective is to promote the exchange of information, ideas and research advances in blood and mar-

row transplantation for diseases in children and adolescents," Dr. Cowan said. "By creating a new focal point for pediatric BMT, we think we can increase the number of pediatric physicians, nurses, and other health care providers within the Society, as well as grow the number of these professionals attending the annual meeting."

When ASBMT members renew their annual memberships, they will have an opportunity to sign up for membership in the SIG at no additional dues cost. Pediatric BMT is the society's second special interest group. A SIG for BMT administrative directors was formed in 1999.

H. LEE MOFFITT PHYSICIAN WINS INVESTIGATOR AWARD

An assistant professor at the University of South Florida's H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute is the recipient of a New Investigator Award from ASBMT and PDL BioPharma. Xue-Zhong Yu, MD, is a member of the cancer center's Experimental Therapeutics Department. His research concerns the function of Tregs and T-effector cells. The \$50,000 award, payable over a two-year term, is supported by a grant from PDL BioPharma, Inc.

Dr. Yu will explore the molecular mechanisms and possible clinical implications of CD4+CD25+ T-regulatory cells (Tregs), a subset of T cells that can modulate alloresponses and possess a great potential as an immunotherapy in bone marrow transplantation.

Dr. Yu plans a series of studies on the function of Tregs and T-effector cells (Teffs), with the goal of understanding the ways in which the CD28 receptor and inducible T-cell co-stimulator (ICOS) control T-cell responses to alloantigen. Both CD28 and ICOS have been found to influence the activation and function

of Teffs as well as development and function of Tregs.

The suppressive activity of Tregs lacking CD28 or ICOS will be tested *in vitro* and in mouse models of graft-versus-host disease (GvHD). The effects of CD28 and ICOS on regulatory and conventional T-cells will be examined as well. The findings will aid in understanding the mechanisms by which these costimulatory molecules affect the outcomes of GvHD.

Dr. Yu said that he hopes his research will contribute to new approaches to controlling donor T-cell-induced GvHD after allogeneic bone marrow transplantation, while preserving the graft-versus-tumor effect.

NEW ICD-9-CM DIAGNOSTIC CODE FOR ORAL MUCOSITIS

A new code for oral mucositis will be added to the ICD-9-CM diagnostic codes, effective Oct. 1. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is adding oral mucositis in an expansion of the "528" stomatitis code.

"We petitioned HRSA to add a mucositis code primarily for BMT patients," said Patrick Stiff, MD, of Loyola University Medical Center, and chair of the ASBMT Committee on Standardization of Outcomes Reporting and RFI. "The new code will increase awareness of oral mucositis toxicity, permit us to track this toxicity in all cancer patients, and potentially will help in re-imbursement."

Dr. Stiff submitted the code request to HRSA last summer and gave a formal presentation in September.

Beginning Oct. 1, the 528 diagnostic codes for stomatitis and mucositis will be:

528.00 – stomatitis and mucositis, unspecified

528.01 – mucositis (ulcerative) due to antineoplastic therapy

528.02 – mucositis (ulcerative) due to other drugs